

Video Production for Inaugural AGB Alumni Gala:
A Collaborative Project Between the Journalism and Agribusiness Departments

A Senior Project
presented to
The Faculty of the Journalism Department
California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

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Bachelor of Science in Journalism

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Abstract

This project was designed to provide an overview of the Agribusiness department and its history at Cal Poly. It was designed to be used for purposes having to do with alumni relations. The goal of the project was to describe, through the use of video, the history of the department and its impact on the Agriculture department at Cal Poly. Ultimately the project is intended to demonstrate the history of where the department started, where it is now, and where it is headed in the future.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The beginnings of the Agribusiness Department at Cal Poly as it is known today were born back in 1956. A group of Agribusiness seniors set out to plan a fundraiser for the department as a group senior project, while showcasing the history and achievements of AGB at Cal Poly. The group decided on an alumni gala with several different elements, including a video to feature at the event. One of the students involved with orchestrating the event was given my contact information and got in touch with me to produce a video that would showcase the history of AGB at Cal Poly.

This project was a collaboration between agribusiness senior Mary Skilling and myself. The final goal of this project was to create a video illustrating the history of Cal Poly San Luis Obispo's Agribusiness Department to be shown at the first annual Agribusiness Gala in November of 2014. We wanted the final video to chronicle the history and highlights of the department since its beginning in the early 1900s through voiceover, photographs and video elements. This project was edited together using Adobe Premiere Pro, and included video interview clips, a scripted voiceover, old VHS tapes in the AGB Department's possession and old photographs dating back as early as the 1950s. The final project was shown during the AGB Alumni Gala on November 8, 2014 at the Alex Madonna Expo Center.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

i. Voiceover

According to Tuggle, Carr, Huffman (2007), with videos that include a voiceover element it is extremely important to both write the script to the video and to write a script that engages the audience. In the case of this video, it was important to match up the photos and videos we were using with the script based on the topics and decades being covered. Tuggle et al. (2007) also emphasizes the importance of mentioning specific things seen in the video in the script. I employed this method whenever possible by going off of a method known as commonly known by some people in the news industry as “SWAP” (Synchronized Words and Pictures). Former KSBY News Director Dan Dennison was mentioned for promoting this method in Tuggle et al. (2007). Noticeable areas in the project video where SWAP was employed can be found with the mentioning of NAMA’s first title for Cal Poly and nearly everything being covered in the 2000’s portion of the video.

ii. Interview Practices

According to Papper (2013), it is important to plan out your questions ahead of time when going into an interview. If a person has no idea what they’re going to ask about, it becomes difficult to start the interviewing process. Papper (2013) says that young reporters often conduct interviews that are far too long because they don’t have a plan and don’t know what they are looking for. According to Papper (2013), a good method for keeping interviews shorter and still getting the desired information is to “ask questions that deliver what you’re after.” It is almost a way to direct the interviewee into giving the exact answer that you’re looking for, and one of the best ways to get a good bite is to ask them to explain something.

Another good way to get good responses is to “make the interviewee comfortable.” Papper (2013) says that interviewing people in settings where they’re

likely most comfortable, like their home, will lead to a better interviewing process.

When interviewing in settings like an office, it is important to situate the interviewee in an open scenario. If they are interviewed while sitting behind their desk, it “serves as both a physical and psychological barrier.” Creating an open conversation, unrelated to the interview topics, before the interview starts can help to develop a repertoire with the interviewee. Making sure that you’re focused on them and nothing else going on in the room or on your phone will also help your interview subject in feeling more comfortable, thus providing you with usable bites for your video or story.

Other methods to employ during the interview process, according to Papper (2013), include utilizing silence as a tool, keeping steady eye contact, and being able to respond or acknowledge the interviewees statement without interrupting them. Using silence in an interview as a tool can be a very effective way of extracting more information, and silence isn’t something that should be shied away from. When the interviewee pauses or stops, wait for them. There is no need to immediately fill their silence with another question, if you wait enough they will likely feel uncomfortable with the silence and offer up more information to break it. Maintaining eye contact without staring is another great way to engage your interviewee. It makes them feel important and realize that you care about what they’re saying. Another positive aspect is that it “helps to take someone’s mind off the equipment.” They will be more likely to look at you than into the camera, which can end up to be slightly disconcerting for a viewer when they watch the finished product back. Another small, but important, tool is to learn how to respond inaudibly. Most often, if you respond audibly to an interviewee’s statement, they will stop. By learning to respond with a nod or a facial

expression, you are keeping the flow and continuity of the interview. It is also possible to lose valuable parts of the interview because there are “uh huh’s” and “mhm’s” thrown into the mix.

iii. Photo Slideshow Methods

According to Welsby (2010) via a Q&A with BBC journalist Paul Kerley, there are several key elements to creating a professional and successful photo slideshow. One of the very first steps is to plan on using somewhere between eight and 10 images per minute. Any more photographs will cause them to pass by too quickly for the viewer to absorb them, and any less can cause them to be on the screen for an excessive period of time and lead to a loss of viewer interest. Using the best quality photograph is important and, in my project’s case, we really only had one option for photographs. The next step that should be made is writing and editing your script, and condensing down your interviews. According to Welsby (2010), you should have about 20 minutes of interview to choose from. It is extremely important that the photographs used match up with the voiceover or interview clips as they are said. Hilliard (2011) recommends leaving still photos on the screen for about three to five seconds when in a broadcast news format, and multimedia professionals recommend about the same time with room for exceptions. The finished video should be somewhere between three and four minutes long. When interviewing you should “plan as much of your slideshow as possible beforehand” Welsby (2010), that way you have as much direction as possible.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This goal of this project was to produce a video that was approximately three minutes in length that would showcase the history of the department throughout the years. It involved piecing old photographs from the department's archives together with a scripted voiceover to narrate the video, along with old VHS tapes of past events in the department and an interview

done with a member of the Agribusiness department's faculty that has experienced its history and achievements firsthand.

The main tool I used for editing together this project was Adobe Premiere Pro. Mary and I started off this project by meeting together on October 20th to decide what we would need to make this project possible. We came to the conclusion that we should combine photographs Mary already had in her possession with a script she had already written and some interviews with prominent members of the AGB department. Another resource we had at our disposal was old VHS tapes of lectures and events that have happened in the AGB department over the years. I spoke with the broadcast technician for the Journalism department, Thomas Morales, about setting up a way to watch the VHS tapes and then import them into Adobe Premiere.

I met with Mary on October 27th to start going through the old VHS tapes; we then decided which pieces would fit appropriately into the video. I used Premiere to edit the videos and use exclusively the clips we found to be relevant. The next step was for me to look over Mary's original script she had written and begin to condense it down to fit the parameters of approximately a three-minute video. Some information was not extremely important to include in the video and some of it was a bit repetitive. I used the skills I have learned over the years in broadcasting to edit the script down to something more concise that will hold viewers' attention. After editing the script it needed to be tracked so it could serve as the voiceover for the video. I used the audio recording program Audacity to track the script with a plug-in "snowball microphone." The audio track then needed to be imported into Premiere so it could be laid under the photographs and video we were using for the project; the audio track also needed to be edited so that pauses between lines weren't too long. Another important step in integrating the audio track was balancing the audio levels; this ensures that none of the audio peaks will "blast out" the ears of listeners and that none of the dips in volume will sound muted or faint.

After laying down the audio track, the next step was to go back through the interview that we did with Agribusiness professor Bill McCorkle. Mary and I went with Richard Gearhart to go visit and interview Professor McCorkle in his office on November 6th. Professor Gearhart has a history in the Ag department so he assisted us in some of the questions to ask Professor McCorkle for the interview. Once the interview was completed I went back to the Cal Poly TV studio to start cutting the interview down with Mary. We found which pieces we thought would supplement the voiceover well and began to cut them out using Premiere. Professor McCorkle had a substantial amount of information and stories about the history of the department to share with us, but unfortunately we didn't have enough time to include all of it in our final video.

Once we had chosen the pieces of Professor McCorkle's interview to use, we had to start piecing the voiceover, the photographs and the interview together in Premiere. One of the key elements in this process was the use of transitions, both in the audio tracks and in between the photographs and videos. Once McCorkle's interview clips were in place we could start going through all of the old photographs that Mary had access to. We started matching the photographs up with the decades and topics covered in the voiceover. To have the photographs flow I used a 10-second cross-dissolve in between every new photograph. I also used a Ken Burns effect to do a slow zoom-in on the photographs to create visual appeal and interest. It took some trial and error to decide how long I wanted the zoom effect to last on each photo; ultimately I decided on the slow zoom to last for about three seconds before it stopped. Another important element with adding the photos was having two "layers" of the exact same photograph everywhere they showed up. I took the "bottom layer" photo and increased the scale until the photograph filled the workspace area for the video; this way there was no "black space" or black frames on either side of the photos. After increasing the scale size to fill the entire frame, I used the "fast blur" video effect to blur out the photograph. The effect this achieved was a background for the "top

layer” photograph that created continuity without serving as a distraction. I set each photograph to appear for approximately five seconds before transitioning to the next; some lasted longer than five seconds because of their relation to the voiceover.

Video transitions were an integral part of project, along with audio transitions. After applying all of the transitions to the photographs and videos, I began to add in audio transitions to the piece. I used the “constant gain” audio transition for this project, and used the effect in between each individual audio clip. I did not want there to be any abrupt cuts to the voiceover that I laid down, or any abrupt cuts to the interview clips of Professor McCorkle we used. The constant gain effect created a pleasing audio fade from one clip to the next, which made the video continuous. I used both an audio and a video transition at the beginning and end of the video to create a smooth transition in and out of the project with no abrupt beginnings or ends.

The final step in this process was to export the entire video project as a whole out of Premiere and onto both a flash drive and several DVDs for Mary. This happened on the evening of November 7th, the night before the gala. The export process is simple, but extremely time consuming. Before the video can begin to export, it must render. Rendering essentially takes the video from being a draft, and then finalizes all of the changes made into one final draft that is one piece. Depending on the amount of video and audio effects used and the length of the video overall, rendering can take anywhere from a minute to hours. In this case, rendering took about an hour and a half. Once rendering was complete, I was able to drag and drop the final mp4 file onto a flash drive and several DVDs that Mary supplied me with. I dropped them off to her at the Alex Madonna Expo Center on the morning of November 8th.

Chapter 4

Analysis

Since this video was a “practical” senior project in my case, there were no quantitative measures that could be assessed because there was no data collected to measure its success. This video was a small portion of overall a very large senior project. A student in the department contacted me to produce a video for the event, but I was not part of the event and senior project as a whole. One quantitative measure to record data that could have been taken was a survey distributed to the attendees that would be able to rate their approval of the video. However, this was something that was out of my realm of control because it was a decision that needed to be made by the agribusiness students involved. I was unable to attend the event personally as I had a

prior commitment. As a result I was unable to take a personal survey of attendees by simply asking them what they thought of the video and its effect upon them; this is something that could have been another measure to collect data in an unofficial manner.

Qualitatively, however, it was deemed a success by those in attendance and involved. I spoke with Mary Skilling the morning after the event and she informed me that the AGB senior project advisor pulled her aside and said it was wonderful, especially those who knew the professor interviewed in the video Mary attended the event and she said that the attendees absolutely loved the video. Richard Gearhart was also in attendance and spoke with the AGB senior project advisor, Jacky Eshelby, and she was extremely pleased with the turnout of the video. Professor Gearhart also said the reception of the video at the event was extremely positive.

Evaluation

This project was ultimately a successful collaboration between the Agribusiness and Journalism departments. I worked with an Agribusiness senior to compile a video that illustrated the history of the department through photographs, interview clips and a scripted voiceover. The video was shown at the inaugural AGB Alumni Gala held at the Alex Madonna Expo Center on November 8th, 2014. The entire video was put together in about a two and a half week time span and was met with a very positive reception by the crowd at the gala. The video can be accessed at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HENmeqXlz94&feature=youtu.be>

Chapter 5

Discussion

Looking back on this project I think that given the amount of time we had to work with that the project was a success. We ended up with a solid video that accurately and engagingly captured the history of the Agribusiness department at Cal Poly from its inception to present-day. From the time we first connected about the project, Mary Skilling and I had about two and a half weeks to research and put together the video. I think that the video would have been more successful if we had been able to get together at an earlier date, ideally closer to the beginning of the quarter than the due date for the assignment. We had initially wanted to interview more people with a history in the AGB department than we ended up with, but the short amount of time we had to work made it difficult to connect with as many people as we wanted to. Given more time I think we should have included more interviews in the video to make it feel more

interactive than just a voiceover paired with photographs with bits and pieces of an interview thrown in.

I think that the video also would have benefited from having music in the background. While the voiceover was effective, because it was supposed to be a feature-type video it seemed a bit slow, in my opinion. I wish that was something we had considered earlier on in the project timeline, although I don't think it made the overall goal of the project unsuccessful. A smaller addition that I think would have benefited the project was lower thirds reiterating what was being said in the voiceover, and lower thirds for interviews where they came in, like with Bob McCorkle. Given all of those circumstances, having Mary to work with was fantastic. She took on more of the research work with the project; researching the history of the AGB department to compile a script for the video and scanning hundreds of old photographs to include; while I took on the more technical side of putting everything together in Adobe Premiere with transitions that helped the video flow and have continuity.

Conclusions

In the end I am happy with how this project turned out. It was the first time something like this had been done, so we had to work with the time, resources, and information that was available to us with little to no instruction. We did not have any prior projects to compare this to, so I think that it will be a fantastic reference for future AGB students when organizing the gala. This project was truly a joint effort and something that I could not have done without Mary's contribution. There were changes that could have been made, but all were minor and did not affect the overall quality and success of the video. It is something that I am proud to be a part of. On top of that, I learned more about the AGB department and its history than I could have learned anywhere else. It was truly a rewarding experience to learn so much about Cal Poly's history and progression over the years.

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Appendix A

Timeline for Project

- October 20th: Met with Mary Skilling to discuss project and come up with parameters for the video; start to develop timeline for putting together
- October 22-24th: Attended several brainstorming meetings with Professor Gearhart and Mary to decide the best method to approach the project
- October 27th: Met with Mary to start looking through old VHS tapes for usable material
- November 6th: Complete interview with AGB professor, Bob McCorkle, with help from Mary Skilling and Professor Gearhart
- November 6-7th: Edited together voiceover, McCorkle interview, scanned photographs and old VHS tapes to create final project, export video onto DVDs and flash drive
- November 8th: Delivered the AGB Video to on DVD and flash drive to Mary Skilling at the Alex Madonna Expo Center

Appendix B

Mary Skilling's Original Script

Before 1956, all agricultural students were production oriented. Their business and economics courses were taken in the Liberal Arts Division.

“In 1901 SLO was a farm and rail town of just over 3,000 people. What’s now the Cal Poly campus was a pasture some distance north of town. The Southern Pacific was putting its just-completed coastline into operation. And it was on March 8 of that first year of the 20th century that legislation founding the California Polytechnic School was signed into law after six years of debate.”

1904

In May, the first annual Farmers' Institute and Basket Picnic is held. Members of the community are invited to the campus to see projects completed by students.

1925

Enterprise projects — the forerunner to today's senior projects — are established for agriculture students, who spend mornings in class and afternoons on their projects. “Earn while you learn” is the motto for the program. A Junior Farm Center Loan Fund, forerunner of today's Corporation, is established to provide students with financial aid for projects.

1931

The Agriculture Department is transferred to the direct supervision of the State Bureau of Agricultural Education. Under direction of Bureau Chief Julian McPhee, the Polytechnic School becomes the state headquarters of Future Farmers of America and the centralized institution for training of vocational agricultural teachers.

1933

The first annual Poly Royal is sponsored by the Future Farmers of America.

1943

The school serves as state headquarters for the Food Production War Training Program, providing instruction to 120,000 California farmers.

1952

Cal Poly begins participation in the International Cooperation Administration (ICA), a federal program that brought “numerous foreign students” from Asia, South America, the Caribbean, and Africa to receive teacher education in agriculture, communications, architecture and engineering.

The FM department was formed in the fall of 1956. Soon after its formation, Professor Goldberg of Harvard University named the expanding field of providing inputs and services to farmers and of marketing their products. He called that field, including farming, AGRIBUSINESS. The title was an instant hit in business and in agricultural education

1956

First incoming class of Farm Management Majors

1959

ABM AgBusiness Management major & department started

1962

ABM club is founded

1967

The curriculum is reorganized into four units: School of Agriculture, School of Engineering, School of Applied Arts, and School of Applied Sciences.

1969

The first NAMA team competes for Cal Poly

1970

AGB as Department is formed

The two departments (FM & AGB Management) we're merged into the department of agriculture management which offered two degrees: FM and AGB Mang.

1975

The two degrees were also merged into one degree: Agricultural Business
McCorkle returns to Cal Poly

1986

The curriculum is reorganized into seven new units: School of

Agriculture, School of Architecture and Environmental Design, School of Business, School of Liberal Arts, School of Engineering, School of Professional Studies and Education, School of Science and Mathematics.

1988

The Agricultural Science building is completed.

1989

First Ag Showcase

1990

**Agricultural Management Major changed to Agricultural Business Major (AM to AGB) *
Four concentrations as of Fall 1990 (Finance & Appraisal, Marketing, Policy, Farm & Ranch Management)**

The last El Rodeo yearbook is issued.

1992

The Dairy Science I facility is completed.

Academic units within the university are reorganized into colleges: College of Agriculture, College of Architecture and Environmental Design, College of Business, College of Engineering, College of Liberal Arts, and College of Science and Mathematics.

1993

Alumnus Al Smith bequeaths his 3,200-acre ranch outside Santa Cruz, along with a substantial endowment, to the College of Agriculture.

1994

The Dairy Products Technology Center is completed.

2001

FDRS begins competing for Cal Poly

2002

Cal Poly is among the 100 colleges and universities nationwide that awards the most bachelor's degrees to Hispanic students, According to a report by the National Center for Education Statistics. It is second or third in agriculture, architecture and engineering.

2004

The Cal Poly College of Agriculture begins offering a bachelor's degree in Wine and Viticulture. The new major blends viticulture, enology and the business aspects of the wine industry.

Cal Poly's Swanton Pacific Ranch receives international sustainable forestry designation for its responsible forestry practices. The ranch was given to Cal Poly in the will of Al Smith, who died in 1993.

2013

Students are working to redesign the AGB Department

2014

The inaugural AGB Alumni Gala (NAMA takes national title)

** “Today the AGB department has an enrollment of over 950 students, a minor in agribusiness that is mainly taken by Ag science majors, and the wine business concentration of the newly instituted degree in Wine and Viticulture.

The AGB Department has over 5,000 active alumni

2020

New learning labs, thousands of dollars in scholarships and an annual Alumni Gala

Appendix C

Edited Script Tracked for Video

BEFORE 1956 ALL AGRICULTURAL STUDENTS WERE PRODUCTION ORIENTED... THEIR BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS COURSES WERE TAKEN IN THE LIBERAL ARTS DIVISION.

THE FARM MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT WAS FORMED IN THE FALL OF 1956. SOON AFTER... PROFESSOR GOLDBERG OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY STARTED REFERRING TO THE FIELD OF PROVIDING SERVICES TO FARMERS AND MARKETING FARM PRODUCTS AS AGRIBUSINESS. THE TITLE WAS AN INSTANT HIT IN BUSINESS AND IN AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION.

IN 1956 THE FIRST INCOMING CLASS OF FARM MANAGEMENT MAJORS ARRIVED AT CAL POLY.

IN 1959 THE AGRIBUSINESS MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT WAS FORMED... STUDENTS BEGAN REFERRING TO THE MAJOR AS A-B-M.

1960 SAW A REORGANIZATION AT CAL POLY. THE CURRICULUM WAS DIVIDED INTO FOUR UNITS... THE SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE... THE SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING... THE SCHOOL OF APPLIED ARTS... AND THE SCHOOL OF APPLIED SCIENCES.

AND THE FIRST NAMA TEAM COMPETED FOR CAL POLY IN 1969.

IT WAS IN 1970 THAT WHAT IS NOW THE A-G-B DEPARTMENT WAS OFFICIALLY FORMED. THE TWO DEPARTMENTS... FARM MANAGEMENT AND A-G-B MANAGEMENT... WERE MERGED INTO THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE MANAGEMENT.... WHICH OFFERED TWO DEGREES.

THEN IN 1975... THE TWO DEGREES WERE *ALSO MERGED INTO JUST ONE DEGREE... AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS.

THE AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE BUILDING WAS COMPLETED IN 1988... THE FIRST AG SCHOWCASE PREMIERED ONE YEAR LATER.

IN 1990 THE AGRICULTURAL MANAGEMENT MAJOR CHANGED TO AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS WITH FOUR CONCENTRATIONS... FINANCE AND APPRAISAL... MARKETING... POLICY... AND FARM AND RANCH MANAGEMENT.

CAL POLY EXPANDED IN 1993 WHEN ALUMNUS AL SMITH LEFT HIS 32-HUNDRED ACRE RANCH... OUTSIDE SANTA CRUZ... ALONG WITH A SIZABLE ENDOWMENT TO THE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE.

2004 SAW THE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE BEGINNING TO OFFER A BACHELORS DEGREE IN WINE AND VITICULTURE.

LAST YEAR IN 2013 STUDENTS BEGAN WORKING TO REDESIGN THE A-G-B DEPARTMENT.

AND THIS YEAR... 2014... SAW THE INAUGURAL A-G-B ALUMNI GALA... AND NAMA TAKES A NATIONAL TITLE.

TODAY THE A-G-B DEPARTMENT HAS AN ENROLLMENT OF MORE THAN 950 STUDENTS... A MINOR IN AGRIBUSINESS THAT IS POPULAR WITH AG SCIENCE MAJORS... AND THE WINE BUSINESS CONCENTRATION OF THE NEWLY INSTITUTED DEGREE IN WINE AND VITICULTURE.

IN ADDITION... THE A-G-B DEPARTMENT HAS MORE THAN 5-THOUSAND ACTIVE ALUMNI. ###